



The Bus Stop Blues

Posted by **Pierluigi Oliverio** on Monday, July 13, 2009

Do you ever wonder what it takes to move a bus stop? Especially those that are located at busy intersections or located right in front of retail establishments? Well, if you have, you are not alone.

My council office gets requests to move bus stops on occasion. Sometimes the request is moving a bus stop that has been in the same location for 30 years, after a the new adjacent homeowner wants it moved. Other times, the request involves genuine safety concerns with bus stops being too close to the intersection.

For example, at the corner of Willow/Meridian, a bus will make a turn onto Willow and then stop, which backs up traffic into the intersection creating gridlock, or causes cars to swerve around the bus blindly.

The City of San Jose does not have direct authority over the location of bus stops, that's Valley Transportation Authority's (VTA) domain. VTA folks are paid with your tax dollars however.

Let me tell you a story of VTA's refusal to move a bus stop on The Alameda, although there is written documentation from November 10, 2004 that shows that they agreed to move the bus stop. As you might sense, a lack of common sense.

Back in 2004, during the planning review process for the new Longs Drugs store on the Alameda, a VTA representative signed off on documents that VTA would relocate their bus stop that is located in front of Longs Drugs and put it one block west on The Alameda. Longs needs to have their delivery trucks deliver in front of the store and they are not able to do so with the bus stop there. This satisfied the neighbors who wanted to prohibit loading on Rhodes Court, a residential street, and it satisfied the City Planners who didn't want to disrupt the existing neighborhood. The new loading zone and relocated bus stop were clearly drawn on the plans for the project and discussed during the public review process.

It is the City's responsibility to send the plans to other agencies, including the VTA, for their review and comment. The communication between the City Staff and VTA Staff resulted in signed document with the VTA saying in writing that they supported the relocation of the bus stop.

After the planning permit approval, Long's proceeded through the Public Improvement Plan review with the City's Public Works Department and Caltrans (since The Alameda is a state highway). The Public Improvement Plans include detailed engineering drawings of all the street improvements, including the new bus stop and the new loading zoning markings and signs. The improvement plans showed the new bus stop being designed and built to VTA standards.

In 2005, Long's then proceeded to spend over \$20,000 to construct the new bus stop during the construction of the new store. Once construction was complete, as required, Long's contractor notified the VTA that it was time to actually relocate the bus stop. However, VTA notified Long's that they would not authorize moving the bus stop afterall.

As a result, the Long's store has no authorized loading area adjacent to the store as designed. The nearest loading zone is on Rhodes Court, the neighborhood street that is perpendicular to The Alameda. Therefore, delivery people must move products across Rhodes Court and up and down two ADA ramps to get to the delivery doors that are in the front of the store facing The Alameda. The lack of a convenient loading zone means that delivery trucks will park on Rhodes Court or will use limited customer parking in the parking lot which requires wheeling deliveries through the store aisles past customers to get to the storage area.

These situations discourage investment in the City and result in creating poor relationships with the community. The City wants new retail services in Neighborhood Business Districts because they add character to neighborhoods, provide some jobs which include small business opportunities and sales tax. But, when taxpayer-funded agencies don't keep their commitments, then potential businesses ask themselves why they are investing and doing business in this community.

Long's followed all the rules. They did everything the neighborhood, the City and the VTA wanted. They spent over \$20k installing the bus stop and designed and built the store with the delivery area facing the Alameda. They wanted to be good neighbors and fit in while being an asset for the nearby community. It is very disheartening to see all this good work and what they get is a slap in a face.

If VTA wants to play fair, perhaps they should refund Longs their money spent building the new bus stop. To date, VTA has never offered to refund the cost to Longs and the bus stop has not moved.

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